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SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

DEPARTMENT FOR AF/FO, AF/RSA, S/P. LONDON AND PARIS FOR
AFRICA WATCHERS. EUCOM FOR POLAD.

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [XA](#) [AF](#) [UNION](#)

SUBJECT: ENGAGING THE AU - THOUGHTS AHEAD OF THE AF COM
MEETING

REF: A. ADDIS ABABA 3010

[B](#). ADDIS ABABA 3461

[C](#). ADDIS ABABA 3313

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED. PLEASE TREAT ACCORDINGLY.

[1](#). (SBU) Summary: The African Union (AU) is displaying tremendous political will to address the continent's problems, which differentiates it from the OAU, its defunct predecessor organization. The AU is also serving as the coordinating body for positive change in Africa by playing a more proactive role in international fora and in promoting member state implementation of continental and international legal instruments. As many of the AU's programs are in their beginning stages, now is the right time to engage the AU to help ensure continental programs and policies are in line with U.S. objectives. Despite positive developments, the AU's ability to act remains constrained by inadequate institutional capacity, which threatens to undermine critical efforts to pursue peace and security and other objectives. Post offers these comments ahead of the November 16 Washington COMs discussion on the future of U.S.-Africa relations. End summary.

WHY FOCUS ON THE AU?

[2](#). (SBU) The AU is positioning itself as Africa's premier continental organization. It holds member states to a higher standard on a range of issues while promoting peace, security, development and prosperity. The AU sees peace and security in Africa as necessarily linked to development and good governance.

[3](#). (SBU) AU responses to events in Darfur, Mauritania and Togo are examples of the AU's conscious decision to adopt a stance of "non-indifference" regarding problems afflicting the continent. Senior AU officials argue that "non-indifference" distinguishes the AU from the OAU and its ineffective policy of "non-interference." The AU is striving to prove that it is no longer a pure rubber stamp of member state whims, but rather seeks to develop the institutional capacity and legal basis to be a proactive leader. "Non-indifference" translates to a more attentive partner; but, as evidenced by Somalia, also to a partner that may attempt to move ahead on its own absent international community support and dialogue.

[4](#). (SBU) 53 member states increasingly look to the AU to coordinate African positions in international fora such as the UN and WTO. AU efforts are geared at bringing about more positive outcomes for Africa. Member states look to the AU to harmonize and bolster their efforts to implement continental and international commitments in areas such as counter-terrorism, health, infrastructure, peace and security, etc.

WHY NOW?

[5](#). (SBU) The AU is in the beginning stages of developing policy and implementation plans for a wide range of issues intersecting with the USG's own priorities for Africa. These plans will set the continent's agenda, so providing technical and financial assistance now will help ensure Africa's programs are more in line with U.S. objectives.

[6](#). (SBU) Doors are currently open for USG engagement. The AU has requested USG assistance to develop a continental "roadmap" for counter-terrorism and to provide technical and other assistance to the Algiers-based African Center for Study and Research on Terrorism. The AU has also requested a U.S. health attache to help guide the institution's response to HIV/AIDS, malaria, polio and other health threats. These are but two specific examples of the AU's actively seeking out USG engagement and input.

----- EXAMPLES OF KEY ACTIVITIES -----

Regional Integration -----

17. (SBU) Key to the AU's ability to project a positive stance is a draft MOU with its regional economic communities (RECs) to better define continental and regional roles and responsibilities. The AU also seeks to harmonize membership in the RECs. To improve the AU's outreach capability and response time, various partners, including the USG, are working to upgrade AU communications infrastructure.

Peace and Security -----

18. (SBU) The AU was forced to establish an ad-hoc mission in Darfur, because it did not yet have a viable continental peace and security architecture. Now the AU is making great strides in concert with the G8 and other partners to develop the African Standby Force (ASF). ASF efforts are geared towards ensuring five regional brigades are formed and possess sufficient doctrine; standard operating procedures; training and evaluation mechanisms; command, control, communication and information systems (C3IS); and logistics capability to undertake progressively more complex peace support operations. The USG is leading assistance for C3IS. Other elements of the peace and security architecture under development include a conflict early warning system, AU field offices, and a Panel of the Wise.

19. (SBU) The African Center for Study and Research on Terrorism (ACSRT) and the nascent CT cell in Addis Ababa seek to assist member states with harmonizing CT efforts and implementing both continental and international CT commitments. The NDU's Africa Center for Strategic Studies has been working with the AU in this pursuit.

110. (SBU) The AU is seeking to carve out a complementary role for itself in post-conflict reconstruction and stabilization.

Good Governance -----

11. (SBU) The AU is leading a review of the Lome Declaration on Unconstitutional Changes of Government, which may give the AU a greater say in addressing poor governance and other factors which may lead to coups.

112. (SBU) Ongoing integration of the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) into AU structures and streamlining NEPAD's focus is expected to increase the effectiveness of the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) and streamline AU efforts to build African infrastructure.

113. (SBU) The AU is working to field more capable elections monitors at each African election.

Trade -----

114. (SBU) The AU sees improving infrastructure as key to increasing African trade and development. To this end, the AU promotes harmonization of policies and strategies for development of land and maritime transport infrastructure, as well as member state adherence to maritime security standards.

115. (U) The AU is also spearheading programs to harmonize policies and regulations in the information and telecommunications technologies fields, and to develop a general energy policy.

116. (SBU) The AU seeks to harmonize member state positions in the Doha round of the WTO.

Health -----

117. (U) Efforts are underway to develop an Integrated Health System in Africa to confront HIV/AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis and other infectious diseases.

Institutions -----

118. (SBU) The AU continues work to establish the African Central Bank, African Investment Bank, African Monetary Fund, and African Court of Justice and Human and Peoples' Rights. In addition, the AU is developing a strategic plan for the Pretoria-based Pan African Parliament. The Economic and Social Council was established in March 2005 to serve as the principal interface between the AU and civil society.

----- CHALLENGES -----

119. (SBU) The AU is an organization of 53 member states ranging in attitude and influence from South Africa to Nigeria to Libya to Comoros. The AU Commission is often constrained by the need to secure member state buy-in each step of the way. The need to not stretch too far beyond member states' vision can render the AU slow to accept some forms of assistance from outside Africa, though the United States and other partners can build upon the AU's ultimate positive experience with partner technical assistance for Darfur. The Commission can also be hindered (Togo) or prematurely pushed (Somalia) into action by strong member states.

120. (SBU) Currently, the AU lacks sufficient administrative and financial structures to implement many of its programs. The lack of a separate DPKO-like mechanism to support missions such as AMIS in Darfur negatively impacts the AU's ability to meet contractor commitments or ensure adequate staffing. Encouragingly, the AU is working with a group of partners to undergo an institutional assessment and implement follow-up recommendations to streamline processes and procedures. The UN is also assisting the AU with improving its peacekeeping support structures.

121. (SBU) Lack of full compliance by member states in paying assessed and voluntary contributions renders the AU overly dependent on contributions from outside the continent and produces delays in program implementation.

122. (SBU) The AU lacks sufficient database collection, input and analysis capability, hindering its ability to make informed decisions to target initiatives with member states.

123. (SBU) The AU sees its leadership in the military and political aspects of finding a solution to the Darfur crisis as a test of its credibility and partnership both with the international community and its member states. Perception of AU failure in Darfur will negatively impact the AU's ability to serve as intervening agent of first resort to address other African conflicts.

KEEPING ENGAGED

124. (SBU) Ensuring that Embassy Addis, and indeed the eventual U.S. Mission to the AU, is properly staffed is crucial to USG ability to track the ever-increasing scope of AU activities and to positively influence outcomes. Proper staffing at this stage includes the assignment of additional senior foreign service officers, including additional USAID officers, a permanent U.S. Military Liaison Officer, and a Health Attache.

125. (SBU) The U.S. should continue to build on its lead partner role in the niche area of communications support to the AU, and work to ensure the AU takes advantage of NATO expertise for peace and security capacity-building. The U.S. should also expand its focus to direct support efforts at institutional capacity building through ESF and other mechanisms. Without proper institutional structures, even peace and security efforts will falter. U.S. support to the AU should also continue to expand beyond peace and security to health, development, political affairs, economic affairs and other areas.

126. (SBU) More positive outcomes of AU Peace and Security Council (PSC) decisions could be fostered by working more closely with key AU member states, including the 15 PSC members.

127. (SBU) Engaging senior AU leaders through regular U.S.-AU Policy Talks will better target USG interaction with and support to the AU.

HUDDLESTON